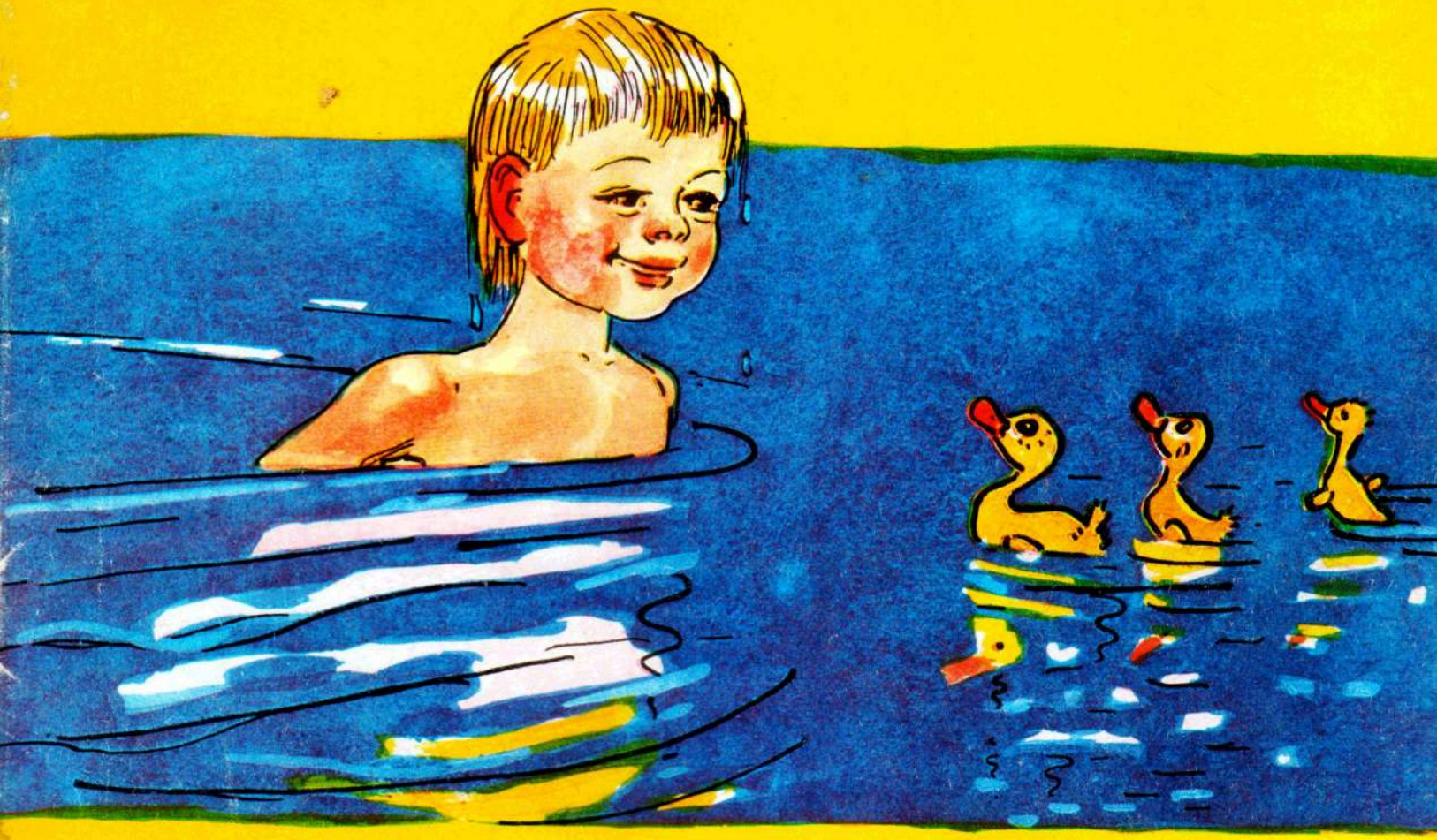
KORNEI CHUKOVSKY

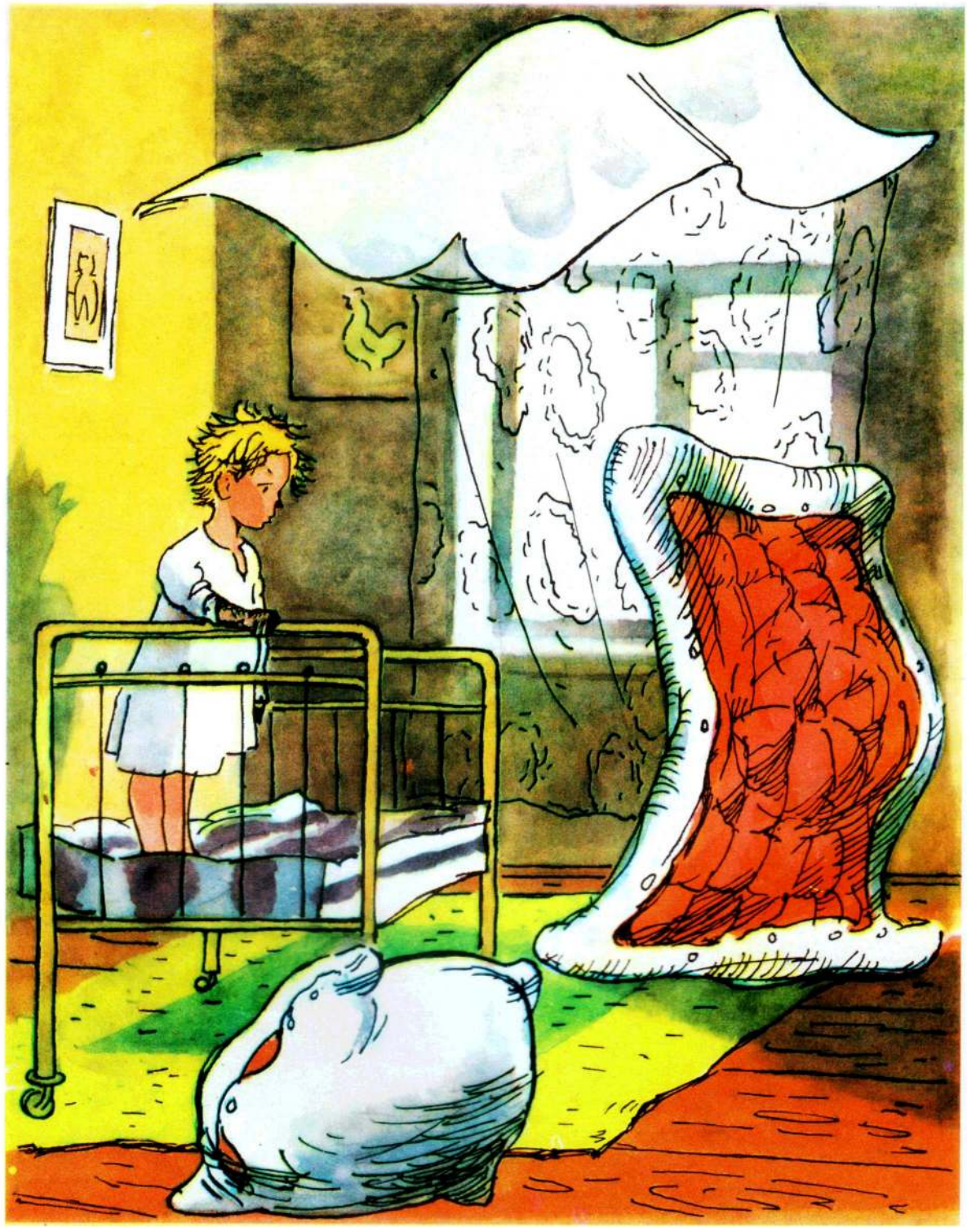
WASH 'EM CLEAN



KORNEI CHUKOVSKY

WASH 'EM CLEAN

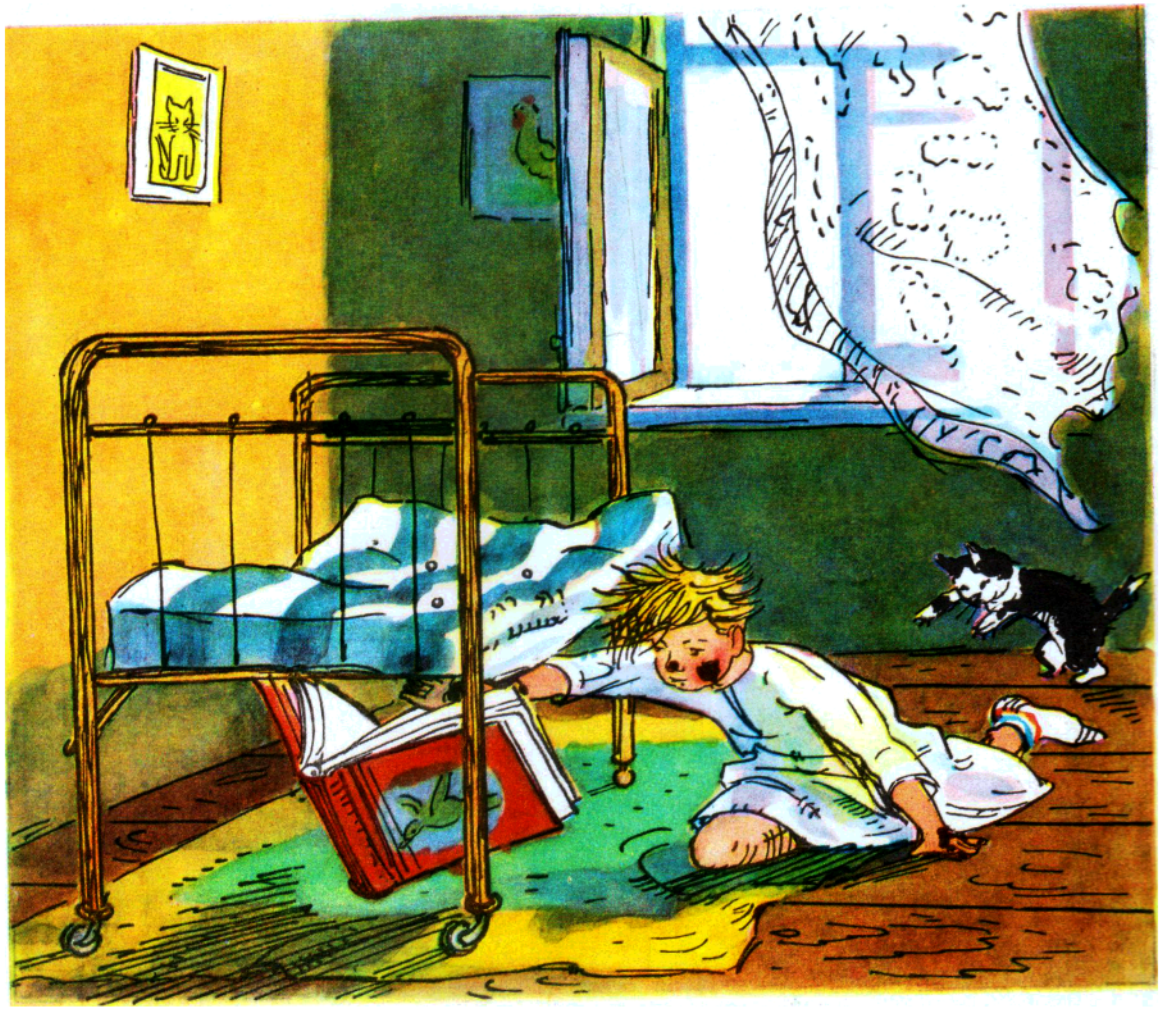
Drawings
by A. Kanevsky



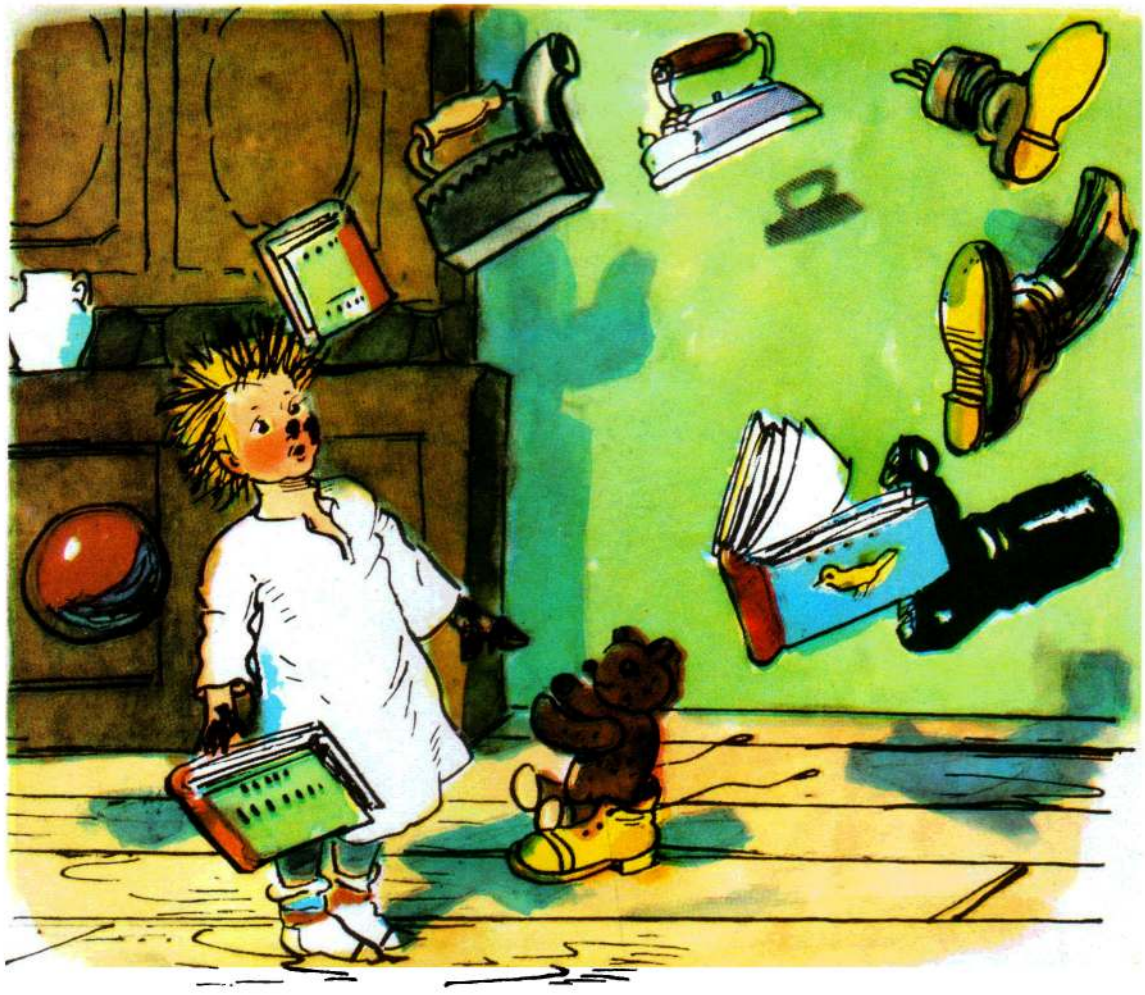
From my bed
The blanket fled,
And the sheet refused to stay,

And the pillow,
Like a billow,
Gathered up and flew away.

I got up to reach the light,
But it also took to flight.
I decided I would look
At my coloured picture-book—
In a twinkling it had fled,
Hiding underneath the bed.

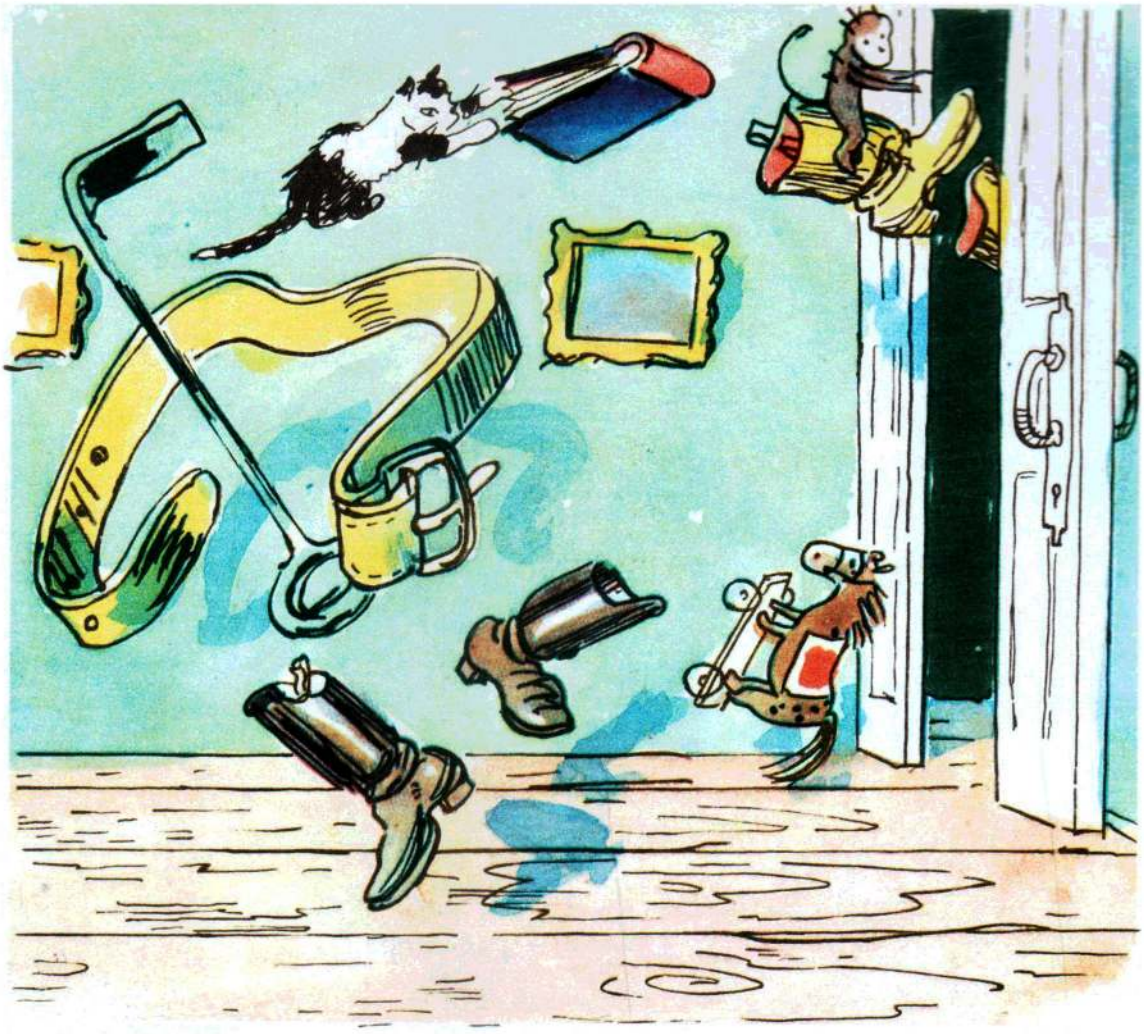


When I thought I'd have some tea,
Cups and saucers ran from me.
Teaspoons, teapot, cream and eggs
Ran as though they all had legs!



What has happened?
What's the matter?
What's the reason
For this rout?
What a tumult,
What a clatter!
Has the world turned inside out?

Mother's irons
chased
the dippers,



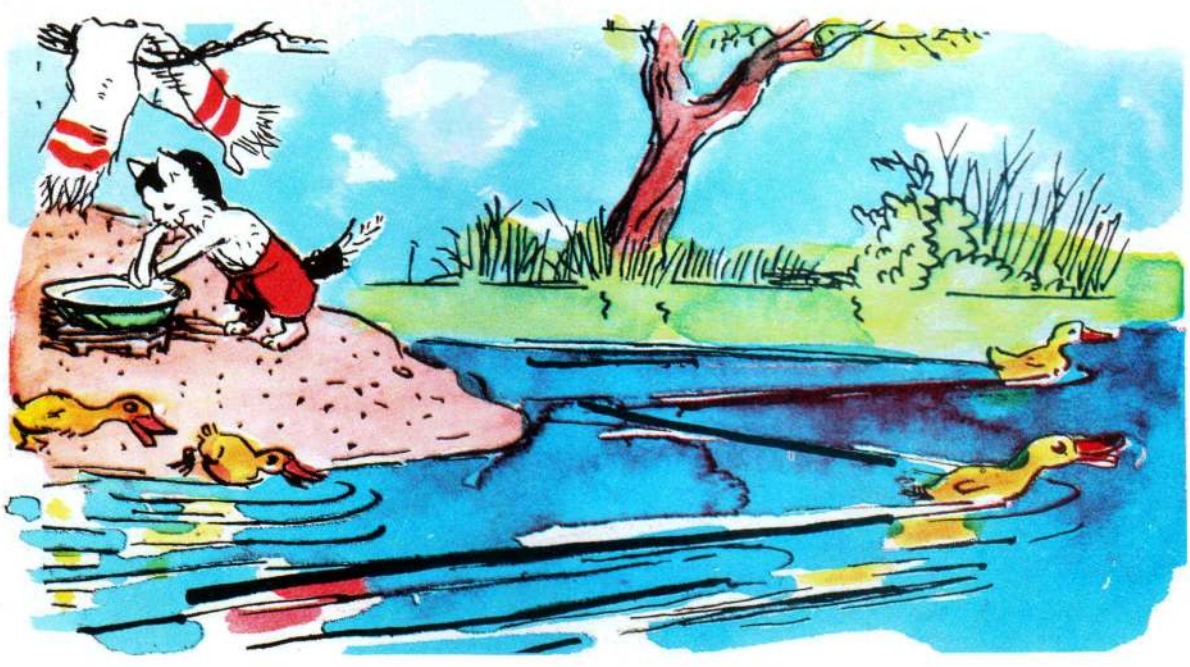
While the bird-cage
chased
the slippers,
And the slippers
chased the nippers,
And the poker
chased
the toys.

What a tumult,
What a racket,
What a horrid, horrid noise!

Suddenly from Mummy's bedroom,
Crooked-legged, old and lame,
Straight towards me came the wash-stand,
And he scolded as he came:

"Oh, you nasty little slacker!
Oh, you naughty little squirt!
There's no chimney-sweep who's blacker,
There's no pig so fond of dirt!
Take a look into the mirror,
See the ink spots on your nose?
And your neck, your dirty fingers,
Never wash them, I suppose?
So no wonder even stockings
Couldn't stand a sight so shocking.

Every morning, bright and early,
All the little mice go washing,
And the kittens, and the ducklings,
And the ants and spiders, too.

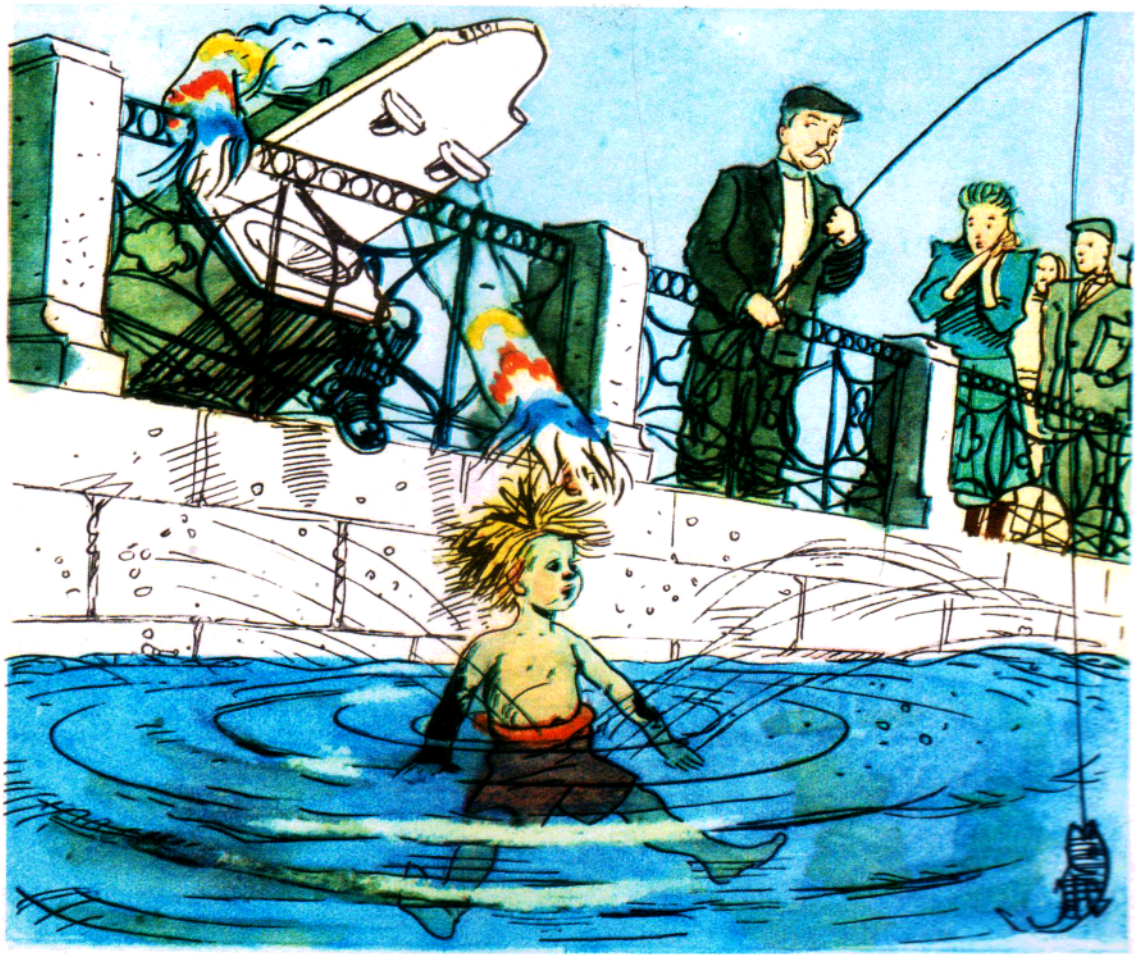


All but you have washed this morning,
Brushed their teeth and combed their hair,
You're the only piggy-wiggy,
So you've nothing left to wear!

I'm a great and famous wash-stand,
'Wash 'Em Clean' is what I'm called.
I command the other wash-stands,
I have troops of sponges bold!

If I stamp, or wave my hand,
All the troops of my command
Will come rushing to this room
With a clangour and a boom!

They will start to snort and howl,
They will stamp their feet and growl.
Though it won't be quite a whipping,
You'll be scrubbed until you gleam.
And a dipping,
And a dipping,
They will give you in the stream!"



Then he smote his bowl of brass,
And he cried: "Kara-baras!"

And at once a swarm of brushes
Chirped and darted round like thrushes,
And they scrubbed, and scrubbed and scrubbed me,
Saying as they scrubbed and rubbed me:

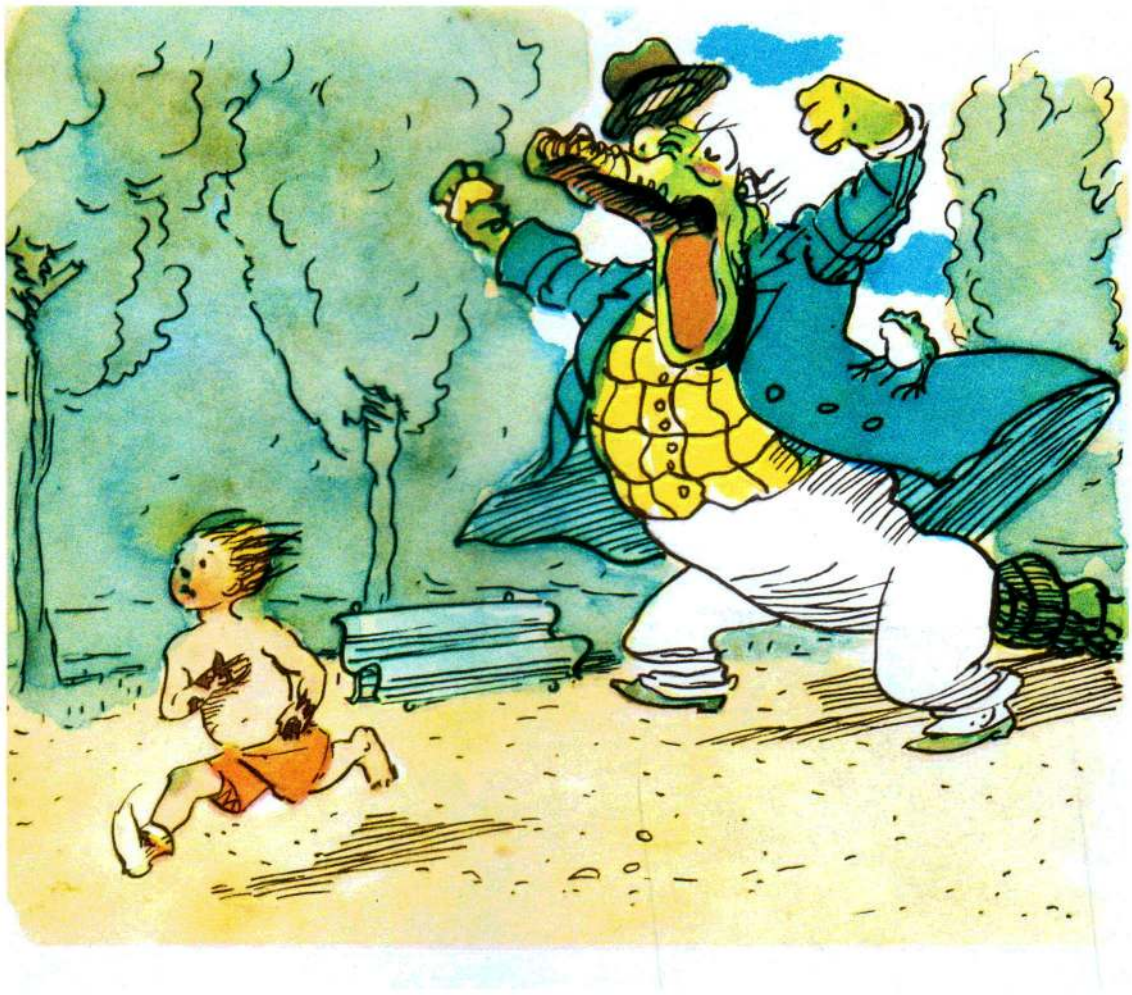
"We will wash this little blighter
Whiter, whiter, whiter, whiter!
We will scrub this naughty mite
White, white, white, white!"

Then the soap jumped up, or rather,
Simply pounced upon my head,
And it covered me with lather,
Till I thought I'd soon be dead.

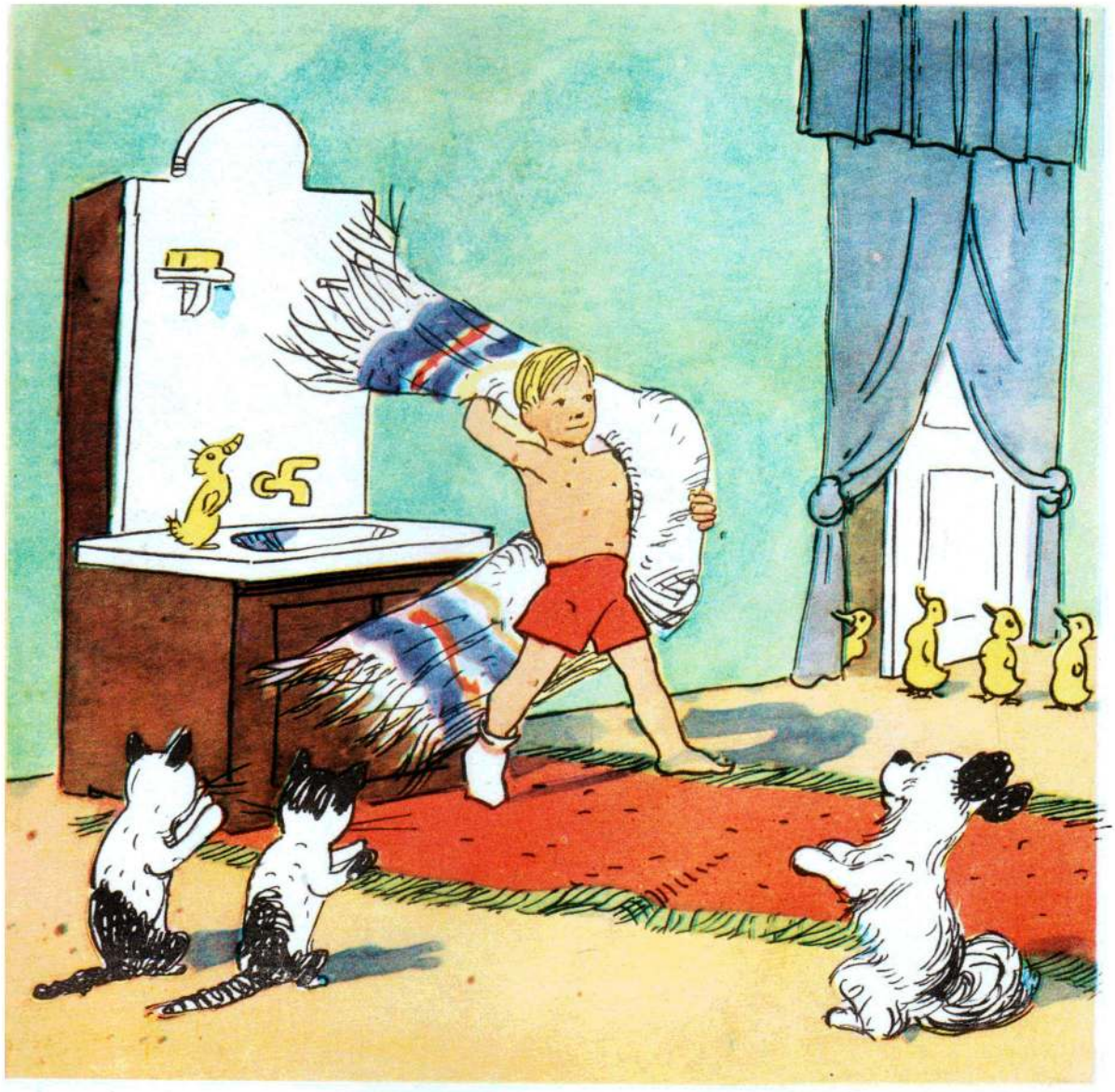
To escape the raging sponge,
In the ocean I could plunge,
But it wouldn't let me be,
Everywhere it followed me.

I rushed out into the square,
Jumped across a railing there,
But it followed like a hound
Biting me at every bound.

Suddenly around a turning
I saw dear old Uncle Croc,
With his twins he was returning
From an early morning walk.
And that sponge which dared to follow,
Like a bit of fluff he swallowed.



Then he turned blood-shot eyes, and he glared,
Then he stamped and he shouted and flared.
"What an awful disgrace,"
he exclaimed.
"Go at once wash your face,"
he exclaimed.
"If you don't, I will beat you!"
he cried.
"If you don't, I will eat you!"
he cried.



I ran homeward like a streak of lightning then,
Till in front of "Wash 'Em Clean" I stood again.
Soap and water,
Soap and water,
I applied with all my might.
Washed the dirt off,
Washed the ink off,
Till my face was beaming white.

Back my clothes came in a band,
Jumping straight into my hand.

And a pie stood up on end,
Saying: "You can eat me, friend."

Then an apple from the south
Flew and landed in my mouth.

There's my picture-book returning,
All my toys, both small and big,
There's my book of sums and primer
Joining in a merry jig!

Then the great and famous wash-stand,
"Wash 'Em Clean", as he is called,
Who commands all other wash-stands,
Who has troops of sponges bold,
Ran towards me dancing, prancing,
Kissing me, he said and smiled:

"That's a darling! Now you're splendid,
Now that all your ways have mended,
All your nasty habits ended,
Now you look a decent child!"

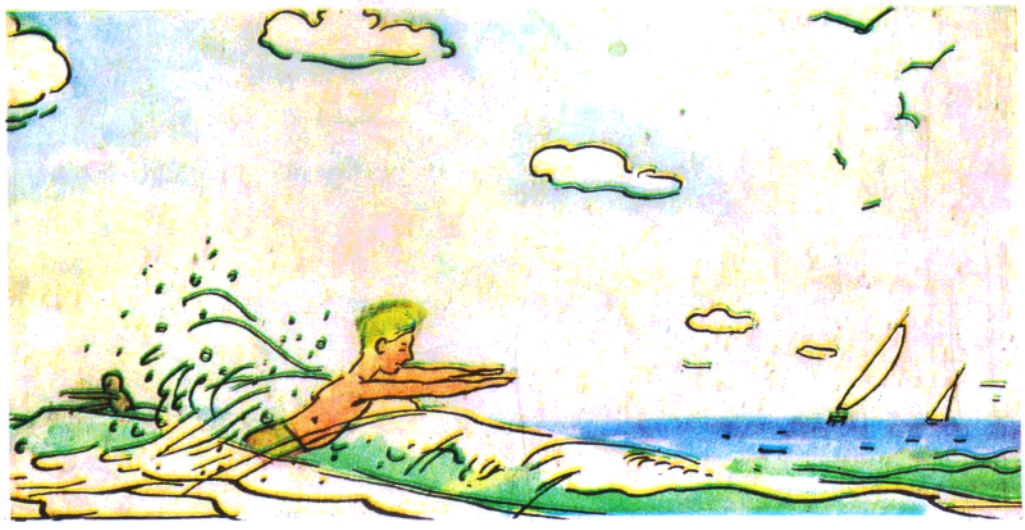
Every morning, every evening,
We must play the washing game,
And to those,
Who're always dirty—
Lasting shame!
Lasting shame!

Hurray for towels and sponges!
Hurray for soapy foam!
Hurray for snow-white tooth-paste!
Hurray for brush and comb!

Then let us all wash every morn, every day,
Let's splash in the water and merrily play

In bath-tubs, in wash-tubs, in basins and bowls,
In oceans, in rivers, with boats and with balls.

Washing is healthy for young and for old,
So glory to water, both steaming and cold!



Translated from the Russian by E. FELGENHAUER

К. ЧУКОВСКИЙ

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